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GHOST RIDER™

SEPARATED AT LAST! JOHNNY BLAZE BATTLES THE GHOST RIDER!

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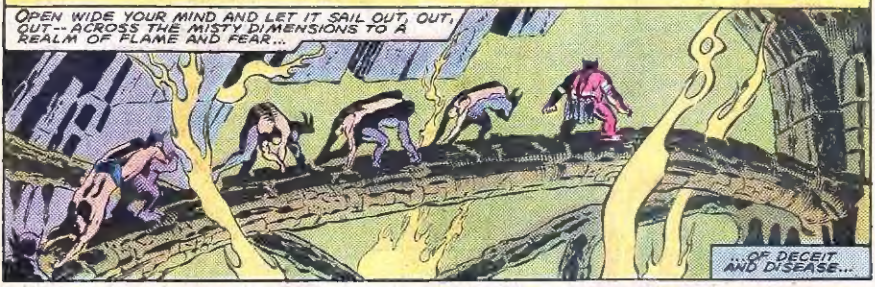
Stan Lee PRESENTS: A STARTLING NEW CHAPTER IN THE LIFE OF GHOST RIDER!

HALF A DEMON...HALF A MAN!


OPEN WIDE YOUR MIND AND LET IT SAIL OUT, OUT, OUT--ACROSS THE MISTY DIMENSIONS TO A REALM OF FLAME AND FEAR...
...OF DECEIT AND DISEASE...

...OF LIES WITHIN LIES WITHIN LIES...
MY LORD, I COME BEARING GIFTS! NEW SOULS FOR YOUR PLEASURE! NEW SINNERS FOR YOU TO TORMENT!
ASMODEUS--YOU COME BEARING NOTHING BUT YOUR OWN SELF-INTEREST!
DO NOT SEEK TO DISSEMBLE BEFORE THE MASTER DISSEMBLER! SOME BEKNIGHTED WRETCHES MAY HOLD YOU IN AWE--BUT YOU ARE INSIGNIFICANCE ITSELF WHEN YOU STAND BEFORE--

J. M. DeMATTEIS SCRIPT | DON PERLIN PLOT GUEST PENCILER | DAVE SIMONS INKS | DIANA ALBERS LETTERS | BOB SHAREN COLORS | TOM DeFALCO EDITOR | JIM SHOOTER CHIEF

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MY LORD--YOU WRONG ME UNJUSTLY! I HAVE MADE THE ARDUOUS JOURNEY FROM MY GLORIOUS KINGDOM--SEEKING ONLY TO PLEASE ONE WHO IS AS A... A BROTHER TO ME--
--AND YOU ACCUSE ME OF DUPLICITY!
PLEASE--ACCEPT MY HUMBLE OFFERINGS WITHOUT SUSPICION!
THEY ARE... ACCEPTED, ASMODEUS! YOU KNOW, OF COURSE, WHAT TO DO WITH THEM!
OF COURSE! INTO THE WELL OF SOULS, THERE TO WRITHE IN UNSPEAKABLE AGONIES UNTIL YOU HAVE DECIDED THEIR ETERNAL FATE!
AND NOW, ASMODEUS--?
NOW WHAT, MY LORD?
UNVEIL THE TRUE REASON FOR YOUR VISIT... OR AT LEAST THE CLOSEST TO TRUTH YOUR TWO-PRONGED TONGUE WILL ALLOW!
AGAIN YOU WRONG ME, MEPHISTO! I HAVE NO VEILED MOTIVES! I HAVE ONLY--
--A SMALL SUGGESTION!
2

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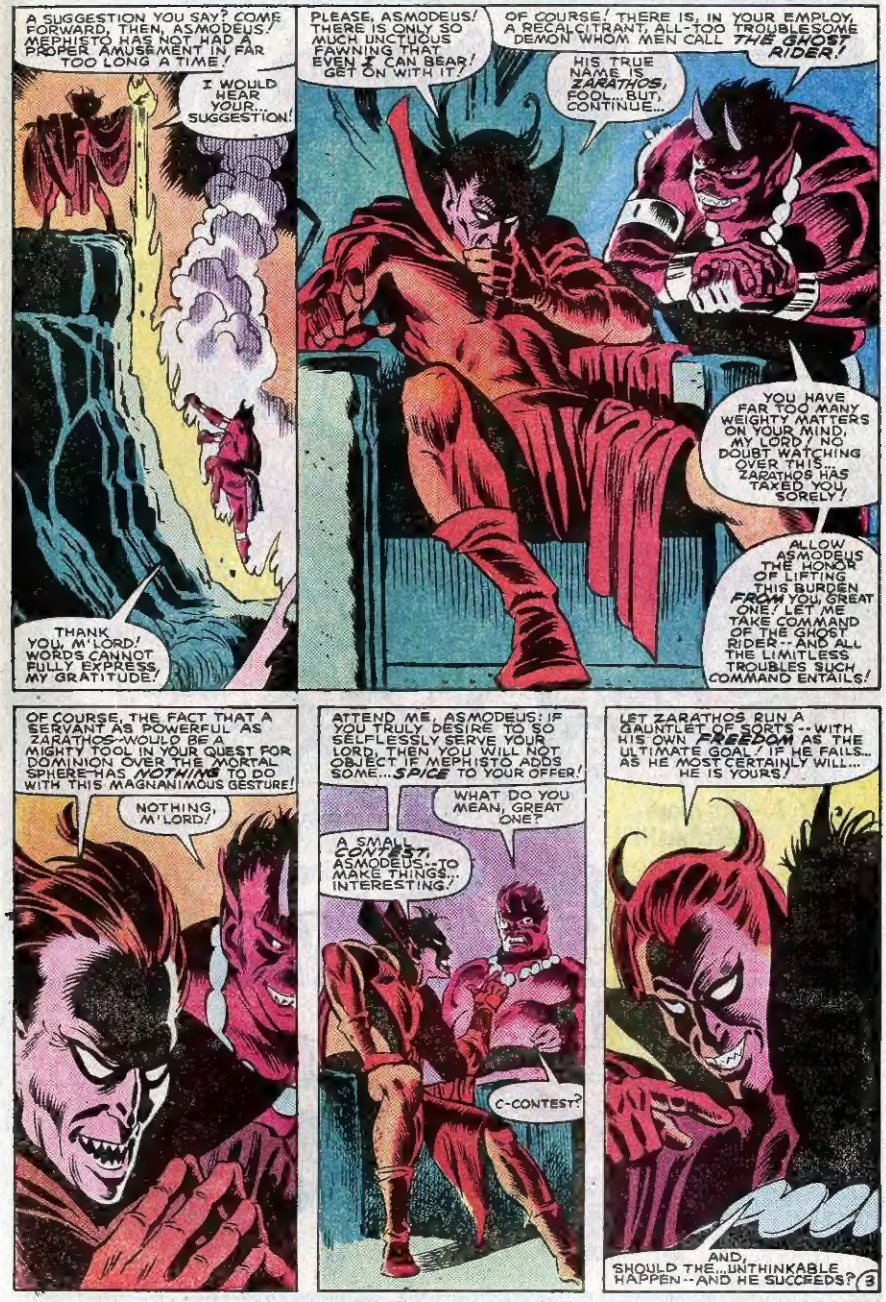
A SUGGESTION YOU SAY? COME FORWARD, THEN, ASMODEUS! MEPHISTO HAS NOT HAD A PROPER AMUSEMENT IN FAR TOO LONG A TIME!
I WOULD HEAR YOUR... SUGGESTION!
THANK YOU, M'LORD! WORDS CANNOT FULLY EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE!
PLEASE, ASMODEUS! THERE IS ONLY SO MUCH UNCTUOUS FAWNING THAT EVEN I CAN BEAR! GET ON WITH IT!
OF COURSE! THERE IS, IN YOUR EMPLOY, A RECALCITRANT, ALL-TOO TROUBLESOME DEMON WHOM MEN CALL THE GHOST RIDER!
HIS TRUE NAME IS ZARATHOS, FOOL... BUT, CONTINUE...
YOU HAVE FAR TOO MANY WEIGHTY MATTERS ON YOUR MIND, MY LORD! NO DOUBT WATCHING OVER THIS ZARATHOS HAS TAXED YOU, SORELY!
ALLOW ASMODEUS THE HONOR OF LIFTING THIS BURDEN FROM YOU, GREAT ONE! LET ME TAKE COMMAND OF THE GHOST RIDER -- AND ALL THE LIMITLESS TROUBLES SUCH COMMAND ENTAILS!
OF COURSE, THE FACT THAT A SERVANT AS POWERFUL AS ZARATHOS -- WOULD BE A MIGHTY TOOL IN YOUR QUEST FOR DOMINION OVER THE MORTAL SPHERE -- HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS MAGNANIMOUS GESTURE!
NOTHING, M'LORD!
ATTEND ME, ASMODEUS: IF YOU TRULY DESIRE TO SO SELFLESSLY SERVE YOUR LORD, THEN YOU WILL NOT OBJECT IF MEPHISTO ADDS SOME... SPICE TO YOUR OFFER!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, GREAT ONE?
A SMALL CONTEST, ASMODEUS -- TO MAKE THINGS... INTERESTING!
C-CONTEST?
LET ZARATHOS RUN A GAUNTLET OF SORTS -- WITH HIS OWN FREEDOM AS THE ULTIMATE GOAL! IF HE FAILS... AS HE MOST CERTAINLY WILL... HE IS YOURS!
AND, SHOULD THE... UNTHINKABLE HAPPEN -- AND HE SUCCEEDS?
3

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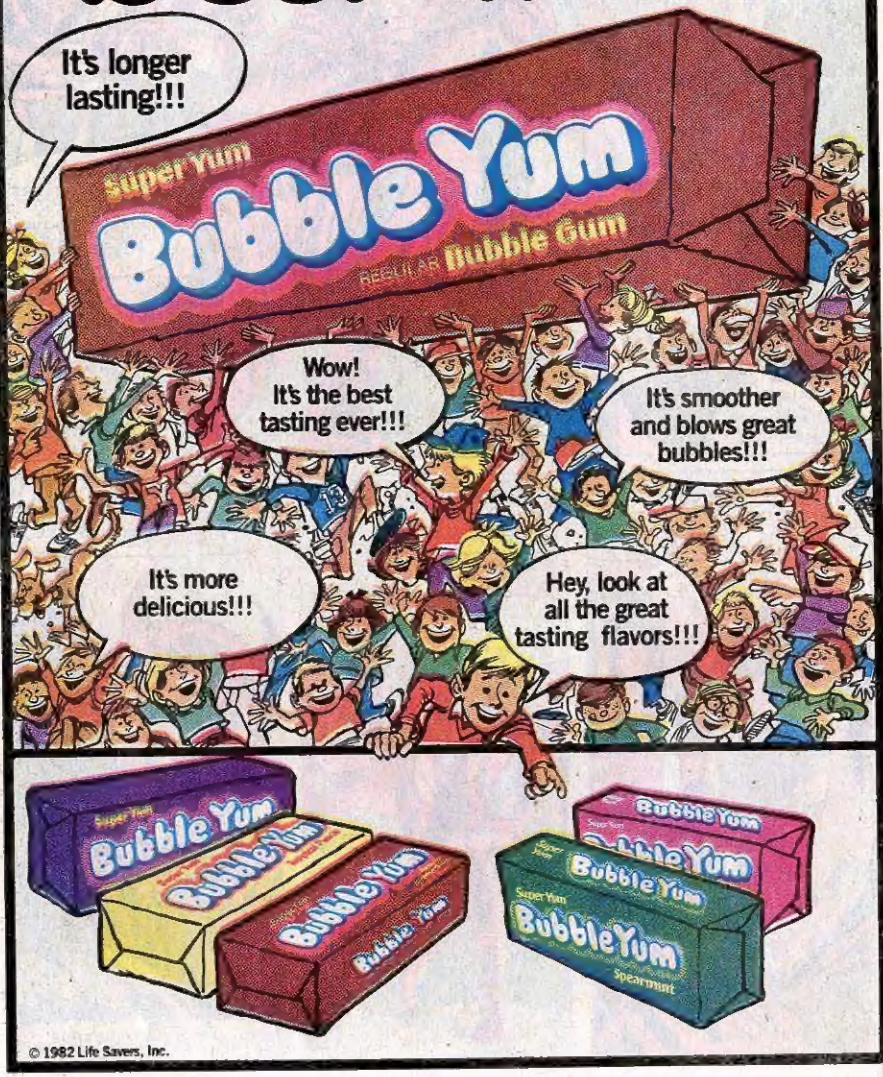
Now Bubble Yum® is SUPER YUM®



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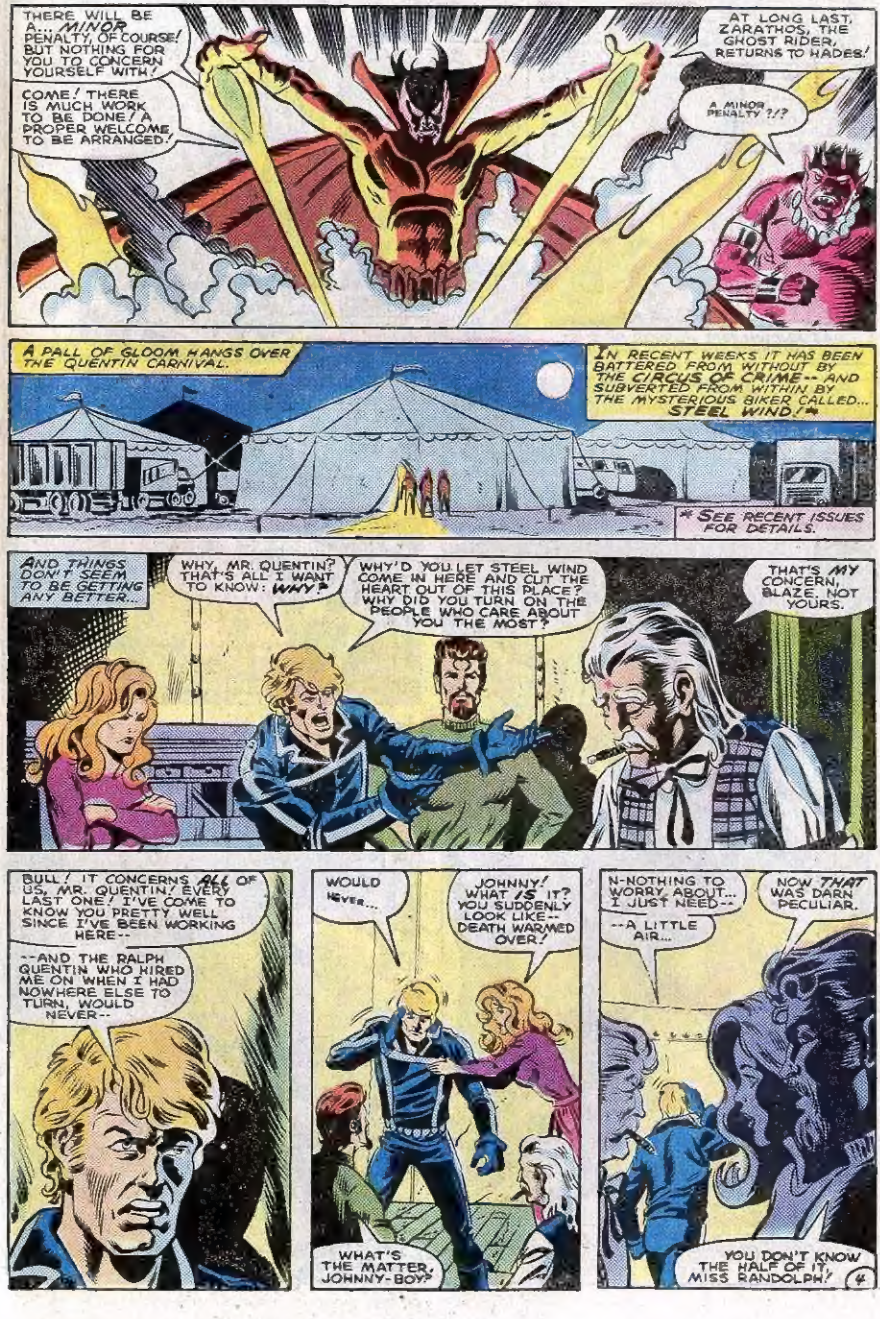
THERE WILL BE A... MINOR PENALTY, OF COURSE! BUT NOTHING FOR YOU TO CONCERN YOURSELF WITH!
COME! THERE IS MUCH WORK TO BE DONE! A PROPER WELCOME TO BE ARRANGED!
AT LONG LAST, ZARATHOS, THE GHOST RIDER, RETURNS TO HADES!
A MINOR PENALTY?!?
A PALL OF GLOOM HANGS OVER THE QUENTIN CARNIVAL.
IN RECENT WEEKS IT HAS BEEN BATTERED FROM WITHOUT BY THE CIRCUS OF CRIME -- AND SUBVERTED FROM WITHIN BY THE MYSTERIOUS BIKER CALLED... STEEL WIND!*
* SEE RECENT ISSUES FOR DETAILS.
AND THINGS DON'T SEEM TO BE GETTING ANY BETTER..
WHY, MR. QUENTIN? THAT'S ALL I WANT TO KNOW: WHY?
WHY'D YOU LET STEEL WIND COME IN HERE AND CUT THE HEART OUT OF THIS PLACE? WHY DID YOU TURN ON THE PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT YOU THE MOST?
THAT'S MY CONCERN, BLAZE, NOT YOURS.
BULL! IT CONCERNS ALL OF US, MR. QUENTIN! EVERY LAST ONE! I'VE COME TO KNOW YOU PRETTY WELL SINCE I'VE BEEN WORKING HERE--
--AND THE RALPH QUENTIN WHO HIRED ME ON WHEN I HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN, WOULD NEVER--
WOULD NEVER...
JOHNNY! WHAT IS IT? YOU SUDDENLY LOOK LIKE-- DEATH WARMED OVER!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, JOHNNY-BOY?
N-NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT... I JUST NEED--
--A LITTLE AIR...
NOW THAT WAS DARN PECULIAR.
YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT, MISS RANDOLPH!

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BUT RED FOWLER DOES! HE KNOWS THAT, WITHIN JOHNNY BLAZE, DWELLS A DEMON: A VENGEANCE-SEEKING NETHERSPAWN THAT MAKES BLAZE'S LIFE A WAKING NIGHTMARE!
FOWLER HAS SEEN THAT DEMON BURST INTO HIDEOUS BEING...
...HAS KNOWN THE HORROR OF THE GHOST RIDER'S INHUMAN LAUGH...
...THE PARALYZING TERROR OF GAZING INTO HIS FLAMING EYES!
BUT, MOST OF ALL, FOWLER HAS KNOWN PITY FOR JOHNNY BLAZE...
...AND AN AWFUL FEAR.
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME? IT FEELS LIKE SOMETHING'S STIRRING UP THE DEMON... FORCING ME OUT HERE TO THIS DESERTED STRETCH OF DESERT!
IT'S AS IF THE GHOST RIDER WANTS ME HERE... AS IF HE'S WAITING FOR SOMETHING!
BUT--? WHAT?
PERHAPS...
...FOR THIS!
LIKE MAGGOTS SWARMING OVER A DECAYING CORPSE, NOISOME CREATURES SLITHER FROM THE SHADOWS, OVERWHELMING THE STARTLED BLAZE!
IN A MATTER OF SECONDS...
BAK!
BLAZE IS DOWN!
CAPERING, GIGGLING, THE SUB-HUMAN BEASTS CARRY BLAZE INTO A SHIMMERING PORTAL THAT INSTANTLY ERUPTS TO LIFE...
5

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...THEN JUST...
...AS QUICKLY...
...VANISHES!
HE... AWAKENS, M'LORD!
I HAVE EYES, ASMODEUS! I SEE!
THE DEMON, MY LORD! BRING HIM FORTH!
YOU ARE OVERANXIOUS, ASMODEUS! YOU FORGET THAT BLAZE IS OUR GUEST!
M-MEPHISTO--? MY GOD--IS THAT REALLY YOU?
A CURIOUS CHOICE OF OATHS, MORTAL--CONSIDERING WHERE YOU ARE!
BUT I AM PLEASED THAT YOU HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN THE ONE YOU ONCE TURNED TO IN NEED, THOSE LONG YEARS AGO!
H-HOW CAN I FORGET THE MONSTER WHO RUINED ME...WHO CURSED ME!
SUCH INGRATITUDE ILL BECOMES YOU, BLAZE! BUT MEPHISTO DOES NOT TAKE SUCH PETTY INSOLENCE TO HEART!
IN POINT OF FACT, I HAVE BROUGHT YOU HERE SO THAT I MAY AID YOU YET AGAIN!
LOOK UPON--
THE SWORD OF DEMONICUS!
6

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I HOLD IN MY HANDS THE MEANS TO YOUR SALVATION! THE POWER TO LIFT, ONCE AND FOR ALL, THIS CURSE YOU BEMOAN!
BUT HAVE YOU THE COURAGE FOR FREEDOM, BLAZE? HAVE YOU THE STRENGTH, THE WILL TO ALLOW THIS BLADE TO FALL?
OR IS YOUR AGONY SO COMFORTING, YOUR PAIN SO WARM AND FAMILIAR--
-- THAT YOU WOULD BEG ME NOT TO STRIKE.
BLAZE'S MOUTH OPENS...
BUT, HIS REPLY IS A STRANGLED CRY!
MEPHISTO TAKES THIS AS ASSENT!
THE SWORD OF DEMONICUS DROPS--CUTS A SWATH THROUGH BODY AND SOUL ALIKE!
AND, INSTANTLY...
FREE!
WITH NO FLESH TO CONSTRAIN ME! NO MORTAL WEAKNESS TO TEMPER ME!
FREE!!
NOT QUITE FREE, ZARATHOS! NOT... QUITE FREE!
7

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DO NOT TAUNT ME MEPHISTO! DO NOT FORCE ME TO RAISE MY HANDS AGAINST YOU!
YOUR HUBRIS IS AS GALLING AS EVER, ZARATHOS! YOUR INFLATED SENSE OF SELF RIVALS THAT OF ASMODEUS!
BUT I HAVE NO DESIRE TO TAUNT YOU, DEMON! YOU HAVE SERVED ME WELL.. IN YOUR WAY!
I HAVE TRANSPORTED YOU HERE TO FREE YOU FROM THE MORTAL BLAZE AND THE HELL SH SERVITUDE YOU DESPISE!
YOU LIE, MEPHISTO! YOU LIE!
AND YOU COME PERILOUSLY CLOSE TO TRANSFORMING MY GOOD WILL INTO UNHOLY RAGE, ZARATHOS.
I HAVE OFFERED YOU INDEPENDENCE. WILL YOU GRACIOUSLY ACCEPT OR SHALL I FIND A NEW FORM FOR YOU TO INHABIT--
--A SNAKE, PERHAPS? OR A MUD-CRAWLING SOW?
AH, I THOUGHT THAT WOULD STILL YOUR ARROGANT TONGUE!
THUS IT REMAINS ONLY FOR THE FINAL PIECE TO FALL INTO PLACE--
FWAMP
AS JOHNNY BLAZE JOINS YOU ON A RACE FOR FREEDOM!
NO! I WILL NOT HAVE MY FATE INTERTWINED WITH HIS ANY LONGER!
SILENCE, ZARATHOS! YOU AND BLAZE MUST JOIN FORCES-ELUDE ALL PURSUERS-- AVOID ALL HELLISH TRAPS-- AND RACE TO THE MYSTIC PORTAL WHICH TRANSPORTED YOU INTO MY DOMAIN!
IF YOU REACH THAT PORTAL TOGETHER, I WILL GRANT YOU THE FREEDOM YOU SO DESPERATELY DESIRE! YOUR SPIRIT WILL NO LONGER BE-BOUND TO BLAZE--
8

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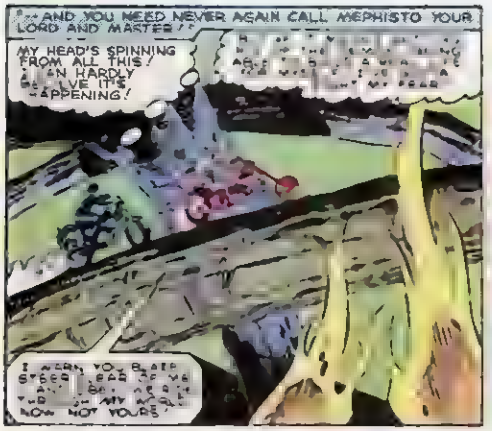
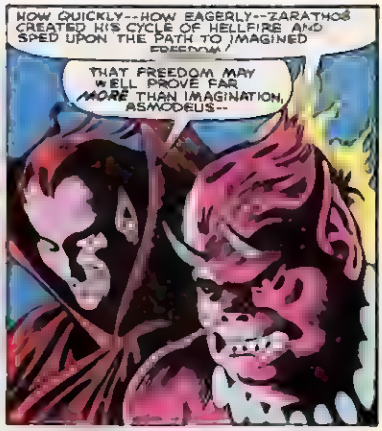
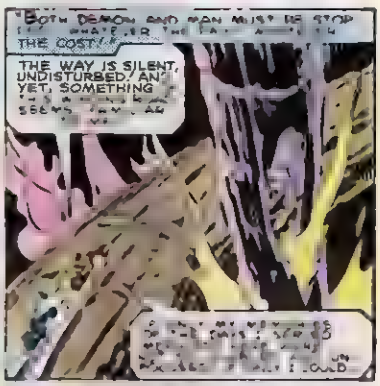

...AND YOU NEED NEVER AGAIN CALL MEPHISTO YOUR LORD AND MASTER!
MY HEAD'S SPINNING FROM ALL THIS! I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT'S HAPPENING!
I WARN YOU, BLADED SPEED [illegible] MY WORLD NOW NOT YOURS!


HOW QUICKLY--HOW EAGERLY--ZARATHOS CREATED HIS CYCLE OF HELLFIRE AND SPED UPON THE PATH TO IMAGINED FREEDOM!
THAT FREEDOM MAY WELL PROVE FAR MORE THAN IMAGINATION, ASMODEUS--



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SATURNINE--
I HAVE COME TO REPAY YOU FOR YOUR PAST INSULTS!
BAH! FROM THE LE I RE- AND YOU ARE LESS THAN THAT NOW!
SHOOM!
LE YOU--HAVE BECOME A JEST!
SO, THE GREAT AND POWERFUL SATURNINE, YOU TAUNT ME WITH A PAST I CAN'T
I'VE GOT AN IDEA..
MOVE!

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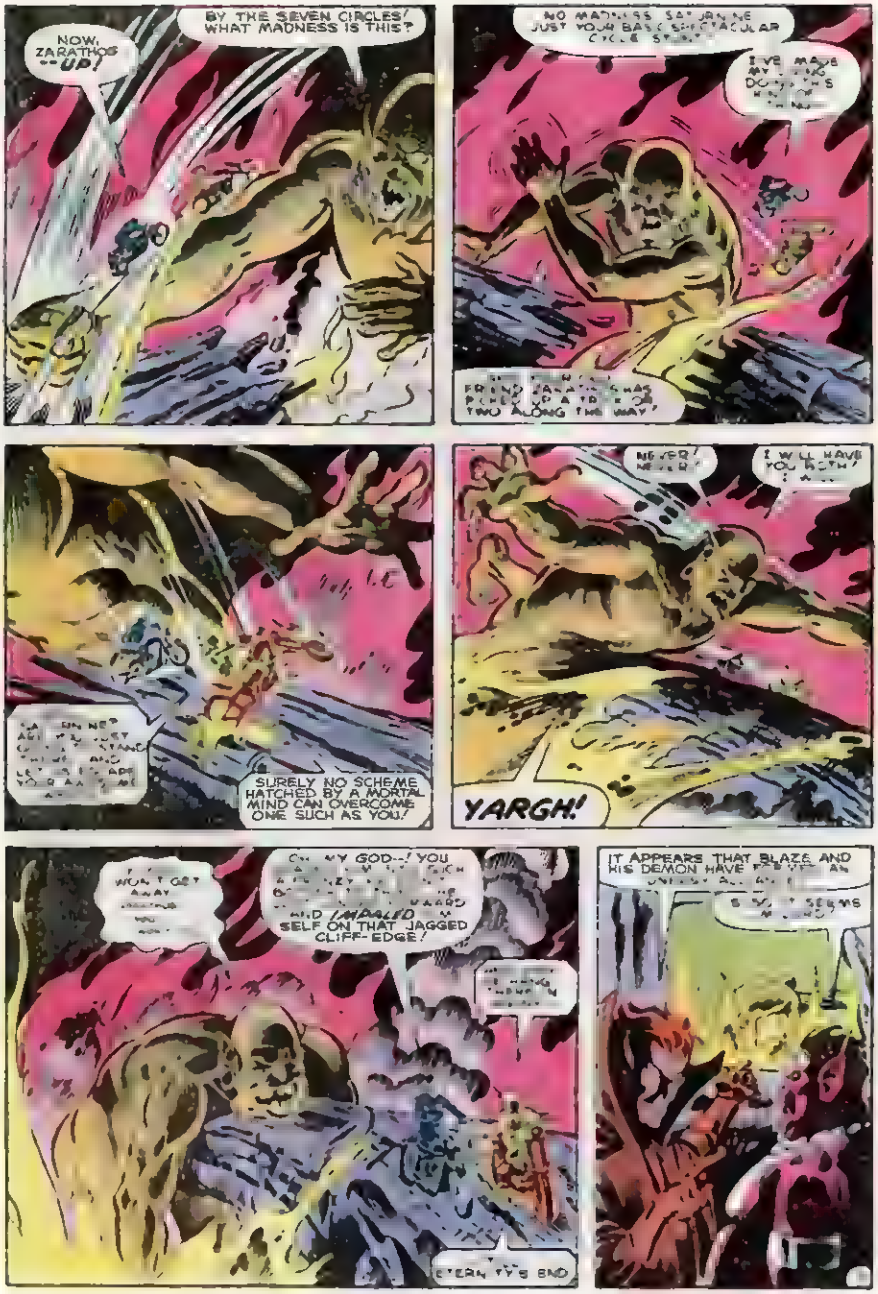
NOW, ZARATHOS — UP!
BY THE SEVEN CIRCLES! WHAT MADNESS IS THIS?
NO MADNESS SAVE MINE JUST YOUR BASIC SPECTACULAR CYCLE STUFF
I'VE MADE MY DOMAINS
FRIEND ZARATHOS WAS PICKED UP A TID E OR TWO ALONG THE WAY!
SURELY NO SCHEME HATCHED BY A MORTAL MIND CAN OVERCOME ONE SUCH AS YOU!
NEVER! NEVER!
I WILL HAVE YOU BOTH!
YARGH!
OH MY GOD--! YOU
WON'T GET AWAY
MID IMPALED SELF ON THAT JAGGED CLIFF-EDGE!
ETERNITY'S END
IT APPEARS THAT BLAZE AND HIS DEMON HAVE

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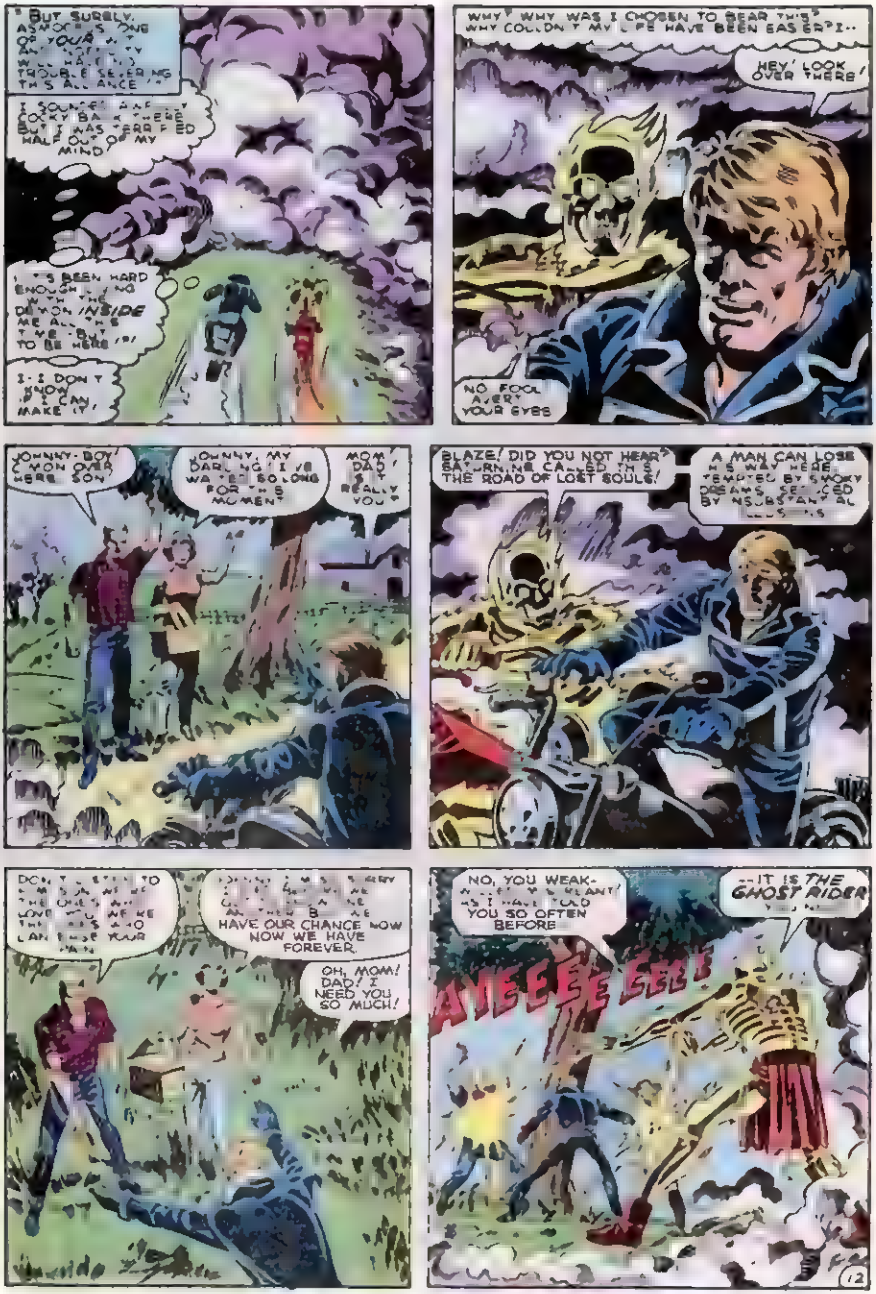
BUT SURELY, ASMODEUS ONE OF YOUR MINIONS WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE SEEKING THIS ALLIANCE!
I SOUNDED AWFULLY COCKY BACK THERE BUT I WAS TERRIFIED HALF OUT OF MY MIND!
IT'S BEEN HARD ENOUGH LIVING WITH THE DEMON INSIDE ME ALL THESE TWELVE BY TO BE HERE!
I-I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN MAKE IT!
WHY? WHY WAS I CHOSEN TO BEAR THIS? WHY COULDN'T MY LIFE HAVE BEEN EASIER?..
HEY! LOOK OVER THERE!
NO FOOL! AVERT YOUR EYES
JOHNNY-BOY! C'MON OVER HERE, SON
JOHNNY, MY DARLING! I'VE WAITED SO LONG FOR THIS MOMENT
MOM! DAD! IS IT REALLY YOU?
BLAZE! DID YOU NOT HEAR SATURNINE CALLED THIS THE ROAD OF LOST SOULS!
A MAN CAN LOSE HIS WAY HERE TEMPTED BY SMOKY DREAMS SEDUCED BY INSUBSTANTIAL
DON'T LISTEN TO HIM SON WE'RE THE ONES WHO LOVE YOU WE'RE THE ONES TO LEAD YOUR
HAVE OUR CHANCE NOW NOW WE HAVE FOREVER
OH, MOM! DAD! I NEED YOU SO MUCH!
NO, YOU WEAK-WILLED FOOL! I HAVE TOLD YOU SO OFTEN BEFORE
--IT IS THE GHOST RIDER
AIEEEEEEE!
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LOOK YOU SIMPERING WEAK-WILLED WRETCH! LOOK UPON THE TRUE FACES OF THOSE WHOSE ARMS YOU WANTED AROUND YOU!
BUT HERE THAT QUALITY ONLY SERVES TO HINDER OUR PROGRESS --AND I WILL NOT HAVE IT!
FUNNY YOU WEREN'T COMPLAINING A FEW MINUTES AGO, WHEN THIS "WRETCH" HELPED YOU BEAT SATURNINE!
THEY BICKER AS JEALOUS LOVERS MAY YET STILL MANAGE TO OUTWIT YOU, ASMODEUS. FASCINATING--IS IT NOT?
HEY! THERE'S SOMETHING AHEAD... POPPING UP OUTTA NOWHERE!
WHAT IN THE NAME OF...
MOUNTAIN OF PEOPLE!
--MOUNT AVARICE!

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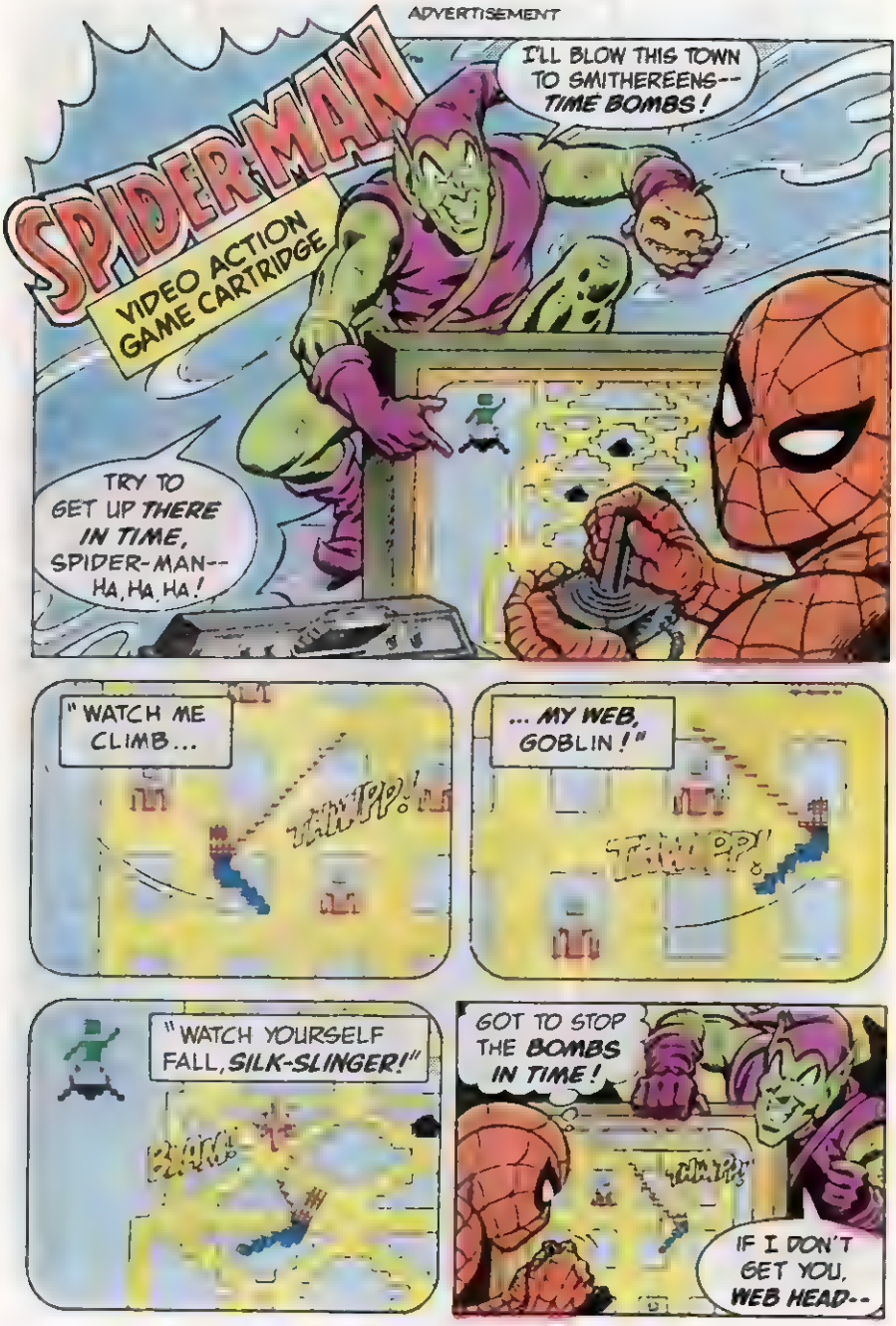
SPIDER-MAN
VIDEO ACTION GAME CARTRIDGE
I'LL BLOW THIS TOWN TO SMITHEREENS-- TIME BOMBS!
TRY TO GET UP THERE IN TIME, SPIDER-MAN-- HA, HA, HA!
"WATCH ME CLIMB...
...MY WEB, GOBLIN!"
"WATCH YOURSELF FALL, SILK-SLINGER!"
GOT TO STOP THE BOMBS IN TIME!
IF I DON'T GET YOU, WEB HEAD--

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The Goblin's time bombs are ticking away. And his Super Bombs sit fiendishly up on High Voltage Towers. The city is on its knees

Only Spider-Man's spidey powers can get us out of this!

Thwipp! He shoots his web and swings up the buildings to reach the bombs.

Thwipp! He shoots again, escaping the Goblin on his web-cutting jet glider.

But watch out! Goblin and his warped gang of criminals have more sneaky ways to cut your web and plunge you to the streets below

Can you get Spider Man to the bombs in time? Your web fluid is getting lower And time is ticking away

For your Atari Video Computer System™ and Sears Video Arcade™

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1982 Parker Brothers, Beverly, Ma. 01915

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IN LIFE, THESE MORTALS WERE NOT UNLIKE TO JOHNNY BLAZE, SO VARY SOULS CONFRONT ONLY WITH THEMSELVES--SHUNNING CONTACT WITH THEIR FELLOW MAN!
HERE THEY PAY FOR THEIR SOLIPSISM BY BEING FOREVER ENTWINED WITH ONE ANOTHER, ETERNALLY UNITED IN A TANGLE OF SELFISH DESIRES!
WHY DO YOU HESITATE, BLAZE? HAVE YOU FINALLY COME TO FEAR YOUR OWN FORBIDDEN POWERS?
IS IT FEAR THAT LOOMS WITHIN YOU? FEAR THAT MAKES YOU PATHETICALLY WEAK? DOES YOUR SENSE A KINDRED SPIRIT IN YOU
AND DRAG YOU DOWN AMONG THEM?
I'M COMING DEMON
AND I'M NOT AFRAID!
YOU TELL ME THAT I'VE BEEN TOO WEAK THAT I'VE PLUNGED AWAY FROM CONTACT WITH OTHER PEOPLE!
AND YOU'RE RIGHT!
BUT YOU WERE THE REASON I TURNED AWAY, WHEN I NEED YET THINGS HAVE STARTED TO CHANGE THESE PAST FEW DAYS AT THE VERY MOMENT I'VE FOUND PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT AND WHO CARE ABOUT ME!
MAYBE I WAS ONCE A KINDRED SPIRIT TO THESE TORTURED SOULS BUT
--NOT ANY MORE
HE STARES DOWN INTO A SEA OF BURNING, ACCUSATORY EYES--AND KNOWS DOUBT--
A SLENDER TENDRIL OF DOUBT THAT ENWRAPS HIM SNAKES HIS CONFIDENCE GIVES HIM PAUSE
HATE AND FRUSTRATION ERUPT FROM THE LIVING MOUNTAIN AS ARMS SNAKE UPWARD AND CLOSE FISTS EMBRACE HIM

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WHAT SAY YOU NOW, M'LORD? THE HUMAN IS LOST... AND ZARATHOS WITH HIM!
ASMODEUS, THERE IS SO MUCH YOU DO NOT FATHOM OF MEN...
AND THE DEMONS THAT ARE THE SHADOWS
BUT HE HAS WON PRECIOUS SOULS FOR HIS OWN IN THE CHRIST'S DEATH HAS BEEN GIVEN HIS
AND CHOSEN
"...RESCUE!"
"NO! THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE! ZARATHOS LOATHES BLAZE! THAT BLIND HATRED
AMODEUS
"...BUT THE GHOST RIDER LOATHES HIS OWN SERVITUDE FAR
BLAZE, IF MEPHISTO'S RULES DID NOT DICTATE THAT WE FINISH THIS GETHER -- I WOULD GLADLY LET YOU SINK IN THAT QUAGMIRE OF FLESH!
BUT I MUST SPARE YOU YET AGAIN!
SURE, YOU'VE SAVED ME! BUT WHAT
FORGET IT! WHAT MATTERS MOST IS OUR FREEDOM!
THE COURSE IS BEST FROM HERE!
ASMODEUS, PERHAPS NOW WOULD BE A FITTING TIME TO DISCUSS THE MATTER OF YOUR... PENALTY?
THERE WILL BE NO PENALTY! ASMODEUS WILL NOT LOSE!
15

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MARVEL SUPER MART

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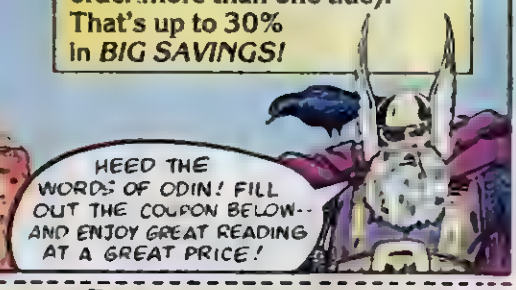

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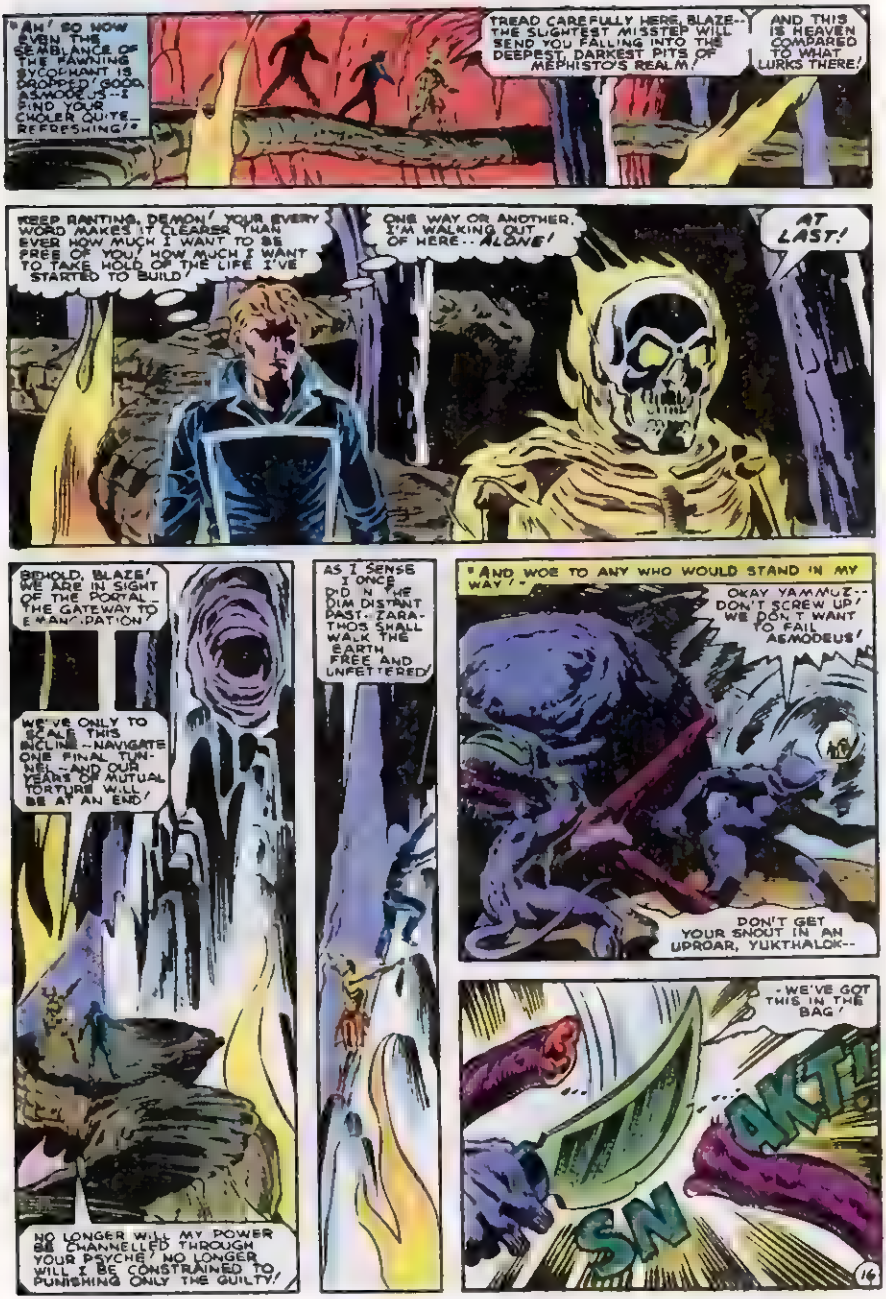
"AH! SO NOW EVEN THE SEMBLANCE OF THE FAWNING SYCOPHANT IS DROPPED! GOOD, ASMODEUS--I FIND YOUR CHOLER QUITE REFRESHING!"
TREAD CAREFULLY HERE, BLAZE--THE SLIGHTEST MISSTEP WILL SEND YOU FALLING INTO THE DEEPEST, DARKEST PITS OF MEPHISTO'S REALM!
AND THIS IS HEAVEN COMPARED TO WHAT LURKS THERE!
KEEP RANTING, DEMON! YOUR EVERY WORD MAKES IT CLEARER THAN EVER HOW MUCH I WANT TO BE FREE OF YOU! HOW MUCH I WANT TO TAKE HOLD OF THE LIFE I'VE STARTED TO BUILD!
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, I'M WALKING OUT OF HERE--ALONE!
AT LAST!
BEHOLD, BLAZE! WE ARE IN SIGHT OF THE PORTAL--THE GATEWAY TO EMANCIPATION!
WE'VE ONLY TO SCALE THIS INCLINE--NAVIGATE ONE FINAL TUNNEL--AND OUR YEARS OF MUTUAL TORTURE WILL BE AT AN END!
NO LONGER WILL MY POWER BE CHANNELLED THROUGH YOUR PSYCHE! NO LONGER WILL I BE CONSTRAINED TO PUNISHING ONLY THE GUILTY!
AS I SENSE I ONCE DID IN THE DIM DISTANT PAST--ZARATHOS SHALL WALK THE EARTH FREE AND UNFETTERED!
"AND WOE TO ANY WHO WOULD STAND IN MY WAY!"
OKAY YAMMUZ--DON'T SCREW UP! WE DON'T WANT TO FAIL ASMODEUS!
DON'T GET YOUR SNOUT IN AN UPROAR, YUKTHALOK--
-WE'VE GOT THIS IN THE BAG!
AKT!
SN
14

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RUMMMMMMMMMMM
WHAT MADNESS IS THIS? THEY ALMOST SEEM TO BE TRYING TO GRIND OUR BONES TO DUST
I'D SAY THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THEY'RE GONNA SUCCEED!
THEY WILL DO NO SUCH THING ALTHOUGH THE STONE ITSELF SEEMS RESISTANT TO MY HELLFIRE--THE GROUND AROUND IT--
--IS NOT!
WHEW! YOU SLOWED THAT THING DOWN IN THE NICK OF TIME! ANOTHER SECOND AND--
SPARE ME YOUR PATRONIZING CONGRATULATIONS! I MAY HAVE PREVENTED OUR DISASTER--
BUT THE WAY IS NOW BLOCKED. WE MUST SEEK AN ALTERNATE PATH TO THE PORTAL.
SURPRISINGLY WELL PLAYED ASMODEUS--BY THESE TWO POSSESS GREAT INGENUITY AND A--
NO THEIR OF WHICH WILL BE OF ANY USE TO THEM.
"--WHEN MY FINAL HAND IS PLAYED."
DON'T LOOK NOW, DEMON.
--BUT THAT WHOLE BLAMMO MOUNT AVARICE IS ROLLING RIGHT TOWARD US! WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO GET PAST!
ASMODEUS HAS US?
17

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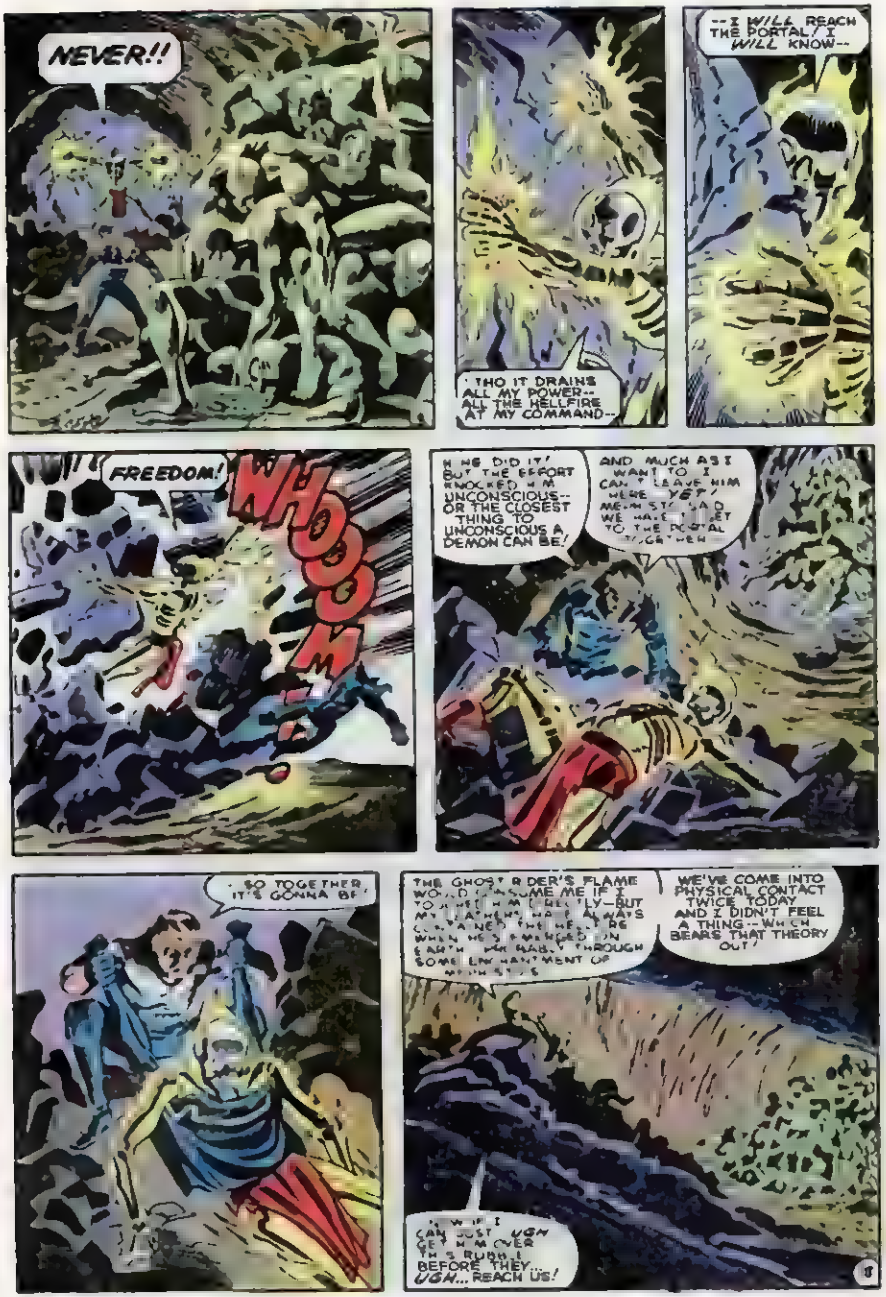
NEVER!!
--I WILL REACH THE PORTAL/ I WILL KNOW--
THO IT DRAINS ALL MY POWER-- ALL THE HELLFIRE AT MY COMMAND--
FREEDOM!
WHOOOM
HE DID IT! BUT THE EFFORT KNOCKED HIM UNCONSCIOUS-- OR THE CLOSEST THING TO UNCONSCIOUS A DEMON CAN BE!
AND MUCH AS I WANT TO I CAN'T LEAVE HIM HERE. YEP! MEGHAN'S DAD WE HAVE TO GET TO THE PORTAL TOGETHER
SO TOGETHER IT'S GONNA BE!
THE GHOST RIDER'S FLAME WOULD CONSUME ME IF I TOUCHED HIM DIRECTLY--BUT MY FATHER HAS ALWAYS CONTAINED THE HEAT WHEN HE'S EMBODIED IN EARTH OR HARM THROUGH SOME ENCHANTMENT OF MYSTICS
WE'VE COME INTO PHYSICAL CONTACT TWICE TODAY AND I DIDN'T FEEL A THING--WHICH BEARS THAT THEORY OUT!
IF I CAN JUST GET HIM OVER THIS RUNE BEFORE THEY... UGH... REACH US!

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MADE IT! BUT THEY'RE STILL COMING -- FASTER THAN I DREAMED THEY COULD!
C'MON, ZARATHOS, I DID MY PART
GET UP, BLAST YOU! GET UP!
YOU DID WHAT ANY MORTAL FOOL COULD DO, JOHNNY BLAZE WHILE I DO--
--WHAT ONLY THE GHOST RIDER CAN!
SHOOM!
HE BURIED THEM BENEATH TONS OF ROCK, THOSE POOR, TORMENTED SOULS!
BUT THE DEMON DOESN'T CARE! HE JUST KEEPS GOING!
I-I CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF THAT THING EVER AGAIN BEING LINKED TO MY SOUL! AND WITH HIM ON EARTH-- THERE'S ALWAYS THAT CHANCE!
THAT'S WHY I'VE GOT TO FIND SOME WAY TO KEEP HIM HERE!
HALT, BLAZE, AS MEPHISTO DECREED! WE HAVE REACHED THE PORTAL TOGETHER-- THE GAME IS WON!
BUT YOU SHALL GO NO FURTHER! ZARATHOS SHALL RETURN TO THE WORLD OF MAN ALONE!
I CANNOT RISK THE CHANCE THAT WE BE REUNITED AGAIN! I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO WALK THE SAME WORLD AS I!
AND SO, JOHNNY BLAZE, YOU MUST... BURN!!
I-I GUESS WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER SO LONG, DEMON-- THAT WE'VE BEGUN TO THINK ALIKE!
FWOOOSH!
WORDS CAN'T EXPRESS HOW SCA THAT MAKES ME FEEL!

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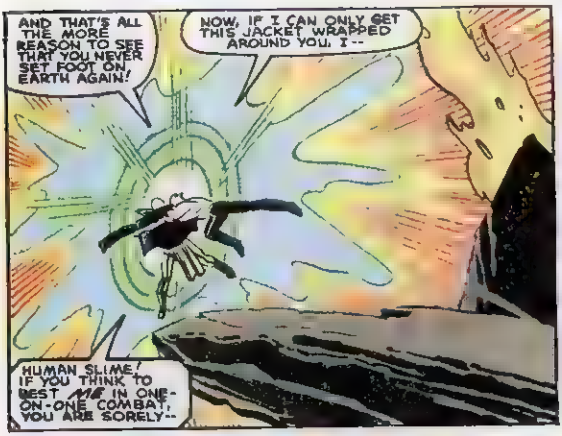
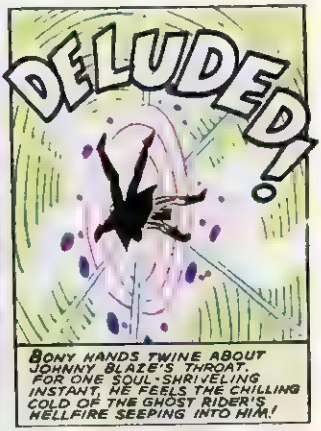
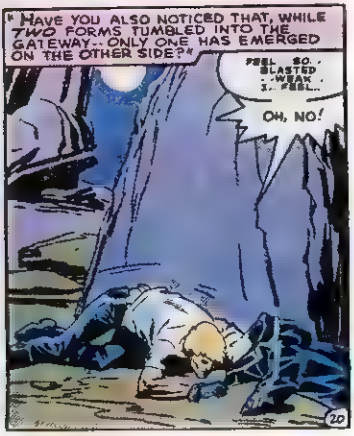

AND THAT'S ALL THE MORE REASON TO SEE THAT YOU NEVER SET FOOT ON EARTH AGAIN!
NOW, IF I CAN ONLY GET THIS JACKET WRAPPED AROUND YOU, I--
HUMAN SLIME! IF YOU THINK TO BEST ME IN ONE-ON-ONE COMBAT, YOU ARE SORELY--


DELUDED!
BONY HANDS TWINE ABOUT JOHNNY BLAZE'S THROAT. FOR ONE SOUL-SHRIVELING INSTANT, HE FEELS THE CHILLING COLD OF THE GHOST RIDER'S HELLFIRE SEEPING INTO HIM!

BY MY HORNS! THEY ARE THROUGH! THEIR VERY STRUGGLE CARRIED THEM ACROSS THE DIMENSIONAL GULFS!
HOW VERY OBSERVANT, YOU ARE, ASMODEUS!


"HAVE YOU ALSO NOTICED THAT, WHILE TWO FORMS TUMBLED INTO THE GATEWAY-- ONLY ONE HAS EMERGED ON THE OTHER SIDE?"
SO... BLASTED... WEAK... I... FEEL...
OH, NO!
20

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GHOST WRITERS!

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
387 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10016

TOM DeFALCO
EDITOR
LINDA GRANT
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Marvel

I have always liked GHOST RIDER, but lately I like him even more. Bob Budiansky draws Ghost Rider better than any artist I've ever seen.

GHOST RIDER #72 was great! The splash page and the first three story pages were very well done, especially the way in which Ghost Rider contacted Johnny Blaze through a dream. I also liked the scene on page 17 where Johnny fought Ghost Rider while trying to change back to his human form.

If GHOST RIDER continues to be as good as the last few issues have been, you can count on me to buy GHOST RIDER every month!

Craig Robinson
8793 NW 35th St.
Coral Springs, FL 33065

It's a deal, Craig!

Dear Tom

The cover of GR #72 alone was enough to alert anyone to the fact that new life is being pumped into this book. (I love the new logo and corner symbol!) Bob Budiansky is great! His storytelling abilities are impressive, and his pencils in "Freaks" (#70) and this issue bring the perfect mood and atmosphere to the series.

"Temptations" was an unusually subtle story that explored the Johnny Blaze-Ghost Rider duality more deeply than ever before. The demon himself only appeared briefly, but he is so ruthless now and insidious that even five pages of him is enough to send chills up my spine. The mirror relationship that Johnny finds himself in with Eliot was done very nicely. It is a strange paradox that Johnny must give way to his own evil nature (Ghost Rider) in order to save Corky, and later, Eliot gives way to his darker side (the Clown) in order to help Corky in the hospital. Is Johnny any better than Eliot?

Overall, I am pleased to see that the supernatural/horror theme has been brought back into GHOST RIDER. It is one of the few such comics being produced today.

Richard J. Guion
12674 Manor Way
Auburn, CA 95603

But it's the *best* one, Richard.

Dear Editor

GHOST RIDER has never been on my buying list, but I picked up #72 because I had nothing better to do today. All I can say is "WOW!"

The script, art and colors captivated me from beginning to end. I really enjoyed it. This issue demonstrates why Roger Stern is one of the most respected writers in the field today. I loved seeing the Circus of Crime; they're not much of a threat but they are enjoyable. I got a big kick out of the art by Bob Budiansky and Dave Simons. Please keep this team on the book for as long as possible. The colors and lettering (by Bob Sharen and Rick Parker, respectively) greatly enhanced the visuals.

GHOST RIDER is now on my buying list to stay. Thank you for entertaining me — I really appreciate it. You'll be hearing from me.

Jacky Balios
No Address Given

You're welcome, Jacky. Be sure to keep in touch, okay? I count on you and other GR readers to keep me up-to-date on how we're doing.

Dear Tom:

I have to tell you that the GHOST RIDER hasn't been as good as this in quite some time. The human touches you've added have made this book more enjoyable. Having Johnny in the limelight is the best way to go. Don't get me wrong — I like seeing the Ghost Rider show up, but Blaze is more interesting than the Demon will ever be.

By the way, I love what Budiansky and Simons have done with GHOST RIDER. The different ways they show Ghost Rider out of his leathers is terrific. Keep up the great work.

Tom Simmons
RR3 Box 134AA
Council Bluffs, IA 51501

Dear Tom

GHOST RIDER has to be the most underrated comic at the present time. GR #72 was a perfect example of how good this book has become. The Stern/Budiansky team worked well together. At the beginning of this issue, Johnny Blaze's surreal dream

was great. My only complaint about this issue was Eliot Franklin's saying on the last page that the Circus of Crime must "take care of Blaze." After all, Johnny did save the life of Eliot's father.

I also really like this book's cast of characters — they work together perfectly. I'm glad it was pointed out that Cynthia Randolph's story is as long as a book. She has been around for quite a while.

Other than that, this issue is... well, I don't have the word, but I have read GR #72 three times!

Harlan York
2 Beechwood Lane
Garnerville, NY 10923

Only three, Harlan?

Dear Tom,

"Temptations!" is just one of the many good stories turned out by the incredible new GHOST RIDER team. I like this story not only because it's a two-parter but because it deals with human emotions: demons that curse us all. I mean, you just can't find supernatural stories anywhere in the unique style that characterizes the pages of GHOST RIDER. Johnny is tempted to become the Ghost Rider to save a friend's life — even though he knows he could wipe out everything else in the process. Red is tempted to tell Johnny he knows his secret but realizes that doing so might present new problems; Eliot is tempted into becoming the leader of super-powered creeps and in the end, loses his battle against temptation in order to get money for his dad's operation.

Everything about this book is suddenly exploding into brilliance, becoming what it was meant to be. But, I have one request. Since the Ghost Rider is a demon, I'd like to see his fire be much more powerful and GR more reckless in general. Think about it, won't you? And I'll be waiting to see every issue you turn out. Life is uncertain these days, but you folks at Marvel make it so much brighter.

John Chavis
346 East 33rd St.
Los Angeles, CA 90011

John, that's our job — and joy!

Dear Marvel

Issue #72 is a landmark issue in my opinion. Here it is clearly delineated that the demon and Johnny Blaze are two distinct beings sharing Blaze's physical body. This was also brought out further by using differently shaped word balloons for each character. I like the idea of continuing stories over a couple of issues or so. Now we can progress further in analyzing the individuals in the stories (future classics).

It is clear to me that GHOST RIDER is a superior book — and that its popularity is going to climb.

Jeffrey Allan
5700 S.W. 31 St.
Miami, FL 33155

I certainly hope so, Jeffrey! See you in thirty!

Tom DeFalco

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BULLPEN BULLETINS

A COUPLE OF THINGS WENT WRONG LAST MONTH...

First, I was so late with the Bullpen Bulletins manuscript that a number of Marvel Comics had to be printed and shipped without it! An ad was inserted in its place at the printer's.

Second, when the Bullpen Page finally got done, it was so late that I couldn't take the time to check it over properly before it went out. As a result, a photo of the Marvel folks in attendance at the wedding of star writer Roger Stern and lovely Carmela Merlo was printed *half* the size I'd intended, and therefore looked a lot like mud.

HERE'S WHY!

Last month I was on the road for almost three weeks, attending the spectacular San Diego Convention in sunny southern California, and the incredible Chicago Con in the wonderful Windy City. I took my briefcase and a large portfolio, both full of work, along with me... but while I was in San Diego – I admit it – I succumbed to temptation. I spent two whole days plus a stolen afternoon or three relaxing. I played racquetball and lifted weights at the hotel's health spa, I went swimming in the hotel pool, jogging along the scenic waterfront, body surfing at the beach, and partying far into the night. I was joined in these thoroughly irresponsible activities by some of my favorite people – Joe Rubenstein, Jim Starlin and his wife Deina Grazziunas, Bill Sienkiewicz, John Byrne and his wife Andrea, Carl Potts and Christie Scheele. It was wonderful – the nearest thing I've had to a vacation in about seven years.

The price for those couple of days off was high. The Bullpen Bulletins did not appear in a number of Marvel titles, and where it did, the photo it carried was naught but a blur. My fault. All my fault.

WHAT'S BEING DONE...

Well, I've already arranged for several of your favorite Marvel personalities to do *guest columns* which will appear on this page every once in a while when I think you folks out there need a change of pace – or when I'm in a jam! Also, I'm going to print another picture of Roger and Carmela when I run his guest column. Also, they made me give back my salary for last month.

OKAY, ON WITH NEW BUSINESS!

Did anyone not see the nifty, sixteen-page Marvel Comics Guide to Comic Collecting which was included in every single copy of *The Amazing Spider-Man #234*? From the response we received it's the most popular bonus feature ever offered in a comic book! If you somehow missed it, head for (or write to) the comics specialty shop nearest you. Many of them ordered a bunch of extra copies of *Spider-Man #234* and of the Guide by itself, and they may still have a few left. If you don't know of any comics specialty shops near you, check the ads in the comic! Many shops and distributors advertise in Marvel publications. Or, write to me. I'll get back to you with a list of shops in your general area. Speaking of such shops, I'd like to thank the folks from SUNSHINE COMICS, located at 6370 BIRD ROAD, SOUTH MIAMI, FLORIDA 33155 for their help and cooperation, without which we couldn't have published the Collector's Guide. They originated the guide, and did hundreds of thousands of collectors across the country a service by allowing us to publish and widely distribute it. Thanks, folks!

MARVEL TROUNCES WARREN!

Thought you'd like to know that on August 3, 1982 the Bullpen Bombers trashed the Warren Warriors on the softball field by a score of 20 – 1. Our left-fielder and manager Robbie Carosella led the attack with five hits in six at bats, including two homers.

Here's the line-up

RF –Archie Goodwin, Editorial Director of *EPIC* – 4 for 6; LF –Robbie Carosella, Photostat Operator – 5 for 6; SS –Harry Eisenstein, Mail Clerk – 0 for-5 (but brilliant in the field), 1B –Jim Shooter, Editor-in-Chief – 2 for 5; CF –Ken Feduniewicz, Special Projects Production – 2 for 5; 3B –Nel Yomtov, Merchandising Development – 4 for 5; P –John Morelli, Letterer/Colorist – 4 for 5; 2B –Lance Tooks, Assistant Editor – 4 for 5; SC –Ken Lopez, Production Assistant – 2 for 5

We had 'em all the way!

I HAVE TO MENTION...

that in San Diego, at their annual awards banquet, our own Archie Goodwin, Editorial Director of *EPIC Illustrated Magazine*, was honored with the prestigious Inkpot Award, acknowledging his contribution to the comics industry. If you want to see one reason why, buy or borrow a copy of *EPIC*. It'll convince you. A bunch of other Marvel folks have received Inkpots as well over the years. I'll run a complete list here sometime soon.

A WEEK LATER...

...in Chicago, at the Con, disaster nearly struck! You see *Spider-Man* was there, live and in person to give away free copies of the latest issues of *The Amazing Spider-Man* to the fans in attendance. The trouble was the shipment of comics never arrived! Fortunately, yours truly happened to bump into old Webhead in his hour of need, and I just happened to be carrying a hundred or so coupons, each good for a free subscription to any Marvel title. I promptly turned the coupons over to our hero, who found them an extremely effective substitute for his missing freebie comics. No problem. Now he owes me one. Just goes to show you, the Boy Scouts are right. Always be prepared.

IT'S ABOUT TIME...

...that I gave Eliot Brown some credit. He's the guy who typesets this thing (and almost every other thing) every month... and he does a darn good job, and we're grateful. But, typesetting isn't his *only* trick. He's also our resident photographer. He took the stunning photo which graced the cover of *Dazzler #21* – as well as most of the other photos that have appeared in Marvel Comics in recent years. If a photo isn't credited otherwise, chances are it's Eliot's work. I should mention, too, that Eliot is our resident technical expert. If something's broken, he can fix it – if something's complicated, he can explain it – if you've got a problem, he can solve it. He draws – and he's especially good at technical drawing, like blueprints, diagrams, cutaways, mechanical drawing – he inks, he colors, he designs, he does boardwork, and other stuff, too, that I can't think of. Best of all, he's a real trouper who's stayed here at the office all night many times helping desperate artists and editors make deadlines. He's probably blushing now, as he typesets this – he's such a humble guy!

Well, Jim, I just don't know what to say, but I think that I'd like to take this singular opportunity to thank all the little people whose coattails I've ridden, when I think of Marvel Comics, the image of selfless comraderie almost, almost brings a tear to my eye, the hours of bonhomie, shoulder to shoulder... I can't go on – well, yes I could, but Jim is sliding his forefinger across his throat. Hmm. Thanks, Jim. Eliot R. Brown

But I couldn't pass the opportunity to let him know he's appreciated! Hooray, Eliot.

CONGRATULATIONS...

...are in order for my former secretary Franku Sienkewicz. Being my secretary has got to be the toughest job in the place (tied, maybe, with the Traffic Manager job, which Virginia Romita handles so well!). It involves representing Marvel to the world and the freelancers, handling an enormous workload including tons of memos, letters and complicated projects, *all* of them urgent and important, supervising three or more office assistants and putting up with *me*. Franku took it all in stride – so well, in fact, that she received an impressive promotion. She is now *Administrative Manager of International Licensing*. Whew! I feel like I should *salute* even when I just write that title! I think what it means is that she's in charge of Europe... or maybe just NATO.

Congratulations, Franku!

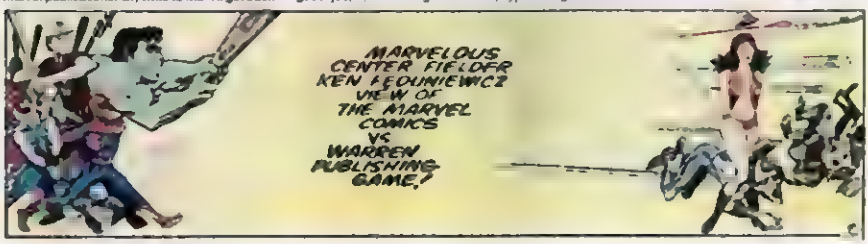
MY NEW SECRETARY...

Pardon me, my new *Administrative Assistant* – the job grew a lot while Franku had it, because she was always eagerly shouldering more responsibility, so we had to change the title – is Lea Sapp. Lea is doing a great job and is already making me forget about o' whatsername. Heh, heh. Just kidding, Frank.

GOTTA GO!

I think I see some NATO bombers headed this way!

Best,



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HE'S INSIDE ME AGAIN! I CAN FEEL THE DEMON INSIDE ME AGAIN!
CURSE YOU, MEPHISTO--YOU LIED!
YOU STINKING, TWO-FACED, ANIMAL--
--YOU LIED!
HEAR ME, LORD OF HADES--
--ZARATHOS SHALL REPAY YOU FOR THIS HUMILIATION! THE GHOST RIDER WILL HAVE HIS VENGEANCE!
IMAGINE THAT, ASMODEUS--MY OWN PETTY SERVANT... THREATENING ME!
HE WOULD DO BETTER TO SAVE HIS MALEDICTIONS FOR HIMSELF AND HIS MORTAL COUNTERPART! FOR, HAD THEY NOT BATTLED--HAD THEY WALKED, SIDE-BY-SIDE, IN PEACE, THROUGH THE PORTAL--
THEY WOULD HAVE REMAINED SEPARATED UNTIL ETERNITY'S ENDLESS END! THE CURSE OF THE GHOST RIDER WOULD HAVE BEEN LIFTED! HA-HA-HA-HA!
YOU ARE NOT LAUGHING, DEAR ASMODEUS! WHAT'S WRONG?
COULD IT BE THAT, LIKE ZARATHOS, YOU ARE PONDERING... REPAYMENT?
21

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S-SURELY YOU JEST! THIS WAS ALL--B-BUT A GAME--
--A SIMPLE AMUSEMENT TO M-M-MOMENTARILY EASE YOUR LORDSHIP'S BURDENS!
I AM NOT AMUSED.
H-HOW SORRY I AM TO LEARN OF THIS, GREAT LORD! AND I WOULD G-GLADLY REMAIN TO DISCUSS THE MATTER FURTHER--
--BUT OTHER MATTERS OF IMPORT--AWAIT ME IN MY OWN F-FAR DISTANT REALM!
AS YOU KNOW--I, TOO, HAVE A K-K-K-KINGDOM TO ATTEND TO!
THE ONLY KINGDOM FIT FOR YOUR RULE, ASMODEUS--
FZZLAFF
--IS OBLIVION!
AND SO THE SKEIN IS COMPLETE-- THE FINAL THREADS WREATHED! I AM RID OF ASMODEUS AND HIS WHINING, SCHEMING WAYS-- AND I HAVE DRIVEN YET ANOTHER SPIKE THROUGH THE HEART OF THE HATED ZARATHOS!
MARK ME WELL, DEMON: AS LONG AS MEPHISTO RULES-- THE FREEDOM YOU CRAVE WILL NEVER BE YOURS!
NEVER!
NEVER!
NEVER!!
THE END?

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